

# Breaking the silence on teen dating violence

# ALERT!

Vol. I, No.5

December, 2000

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Islanders**

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The East Cherry YWCA program is in some ways in the midst of a re-birth! Teen advocates from the past academic year included many seniors at Garfield High School, so with fall they went off to new academic and personal adventures. At the same time, the long-time program coordinator Alisa Bierria took a new job and Lexi Jackson was hired as the new coordinator. So far, she hasn't stopped running!

New teen advocates at Franklin and Garfield High School are now in training. Each must complete 40 hours of training on dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, same sex relationships, sexually transmitted diseases, oppression and discrimination, and how the African American community is responding to violence. Most of the training is talk-oriented — and this points up one of the key challenges facing African American youth and other youth of color working on teen dating violence.

Training and illustration resources — like videos, posters, books and articles — on teen dating violence are quite limited. This is even more complicated for youth of color, who do not see themselves reflected in the largely white, middle-class actors and models in these materials. So trainers like Lexi must work double-time to help youth not only hear the message about violence — but also translate that message into their own lives and experiences.

For example, Lexi points out that African American teens sometimes don't see name-calling and belittling among their peers as sources of hurt — these are not taken seriously in terms of how they

affect self-image — and yet being regularly called a B— or a “Ho,” she believes, does have a profound effect on young women.

Lexi points to other barriers in helping African American teens who are involved in violent relationships. Distrust of services in the community is strong, she says — the legacy of a history of having services come and go in the community due to inadequate funding and changing policy approaches on the part of funders and government. Learned behavior, like distrust of the police, and fear of systems that interfere in their lives, is also a barrier.

However, the greatest problem Lexi sees is internalized oppression. Her approach to working with young women is highly personal. She shares her own struggles to overcome violence and lack of self-esteem, and her own journey

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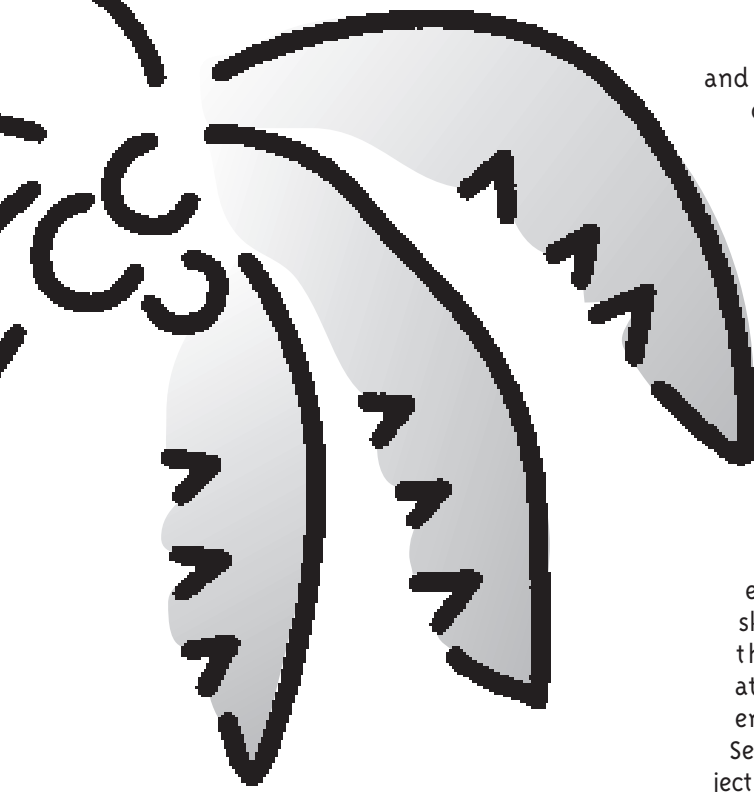
towards self-understanding. She says that her goal is to help young women develop a point of reference for themselves about what they want in their relationships — so that when they are in the relationship, they can gauge whether it's healthy for them and giving them what they want.

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**ALERT!** — a newsletter for people concerned about teen dating violence, is produced by the King County Women's Advisory Board — a program of the King County Department of Community and Human Services.

**This publication is available in alternative formats upon request.**

If you have feedback on any part of the ALERT!, we hope that you will contact us and share your ideas. The ALERT! should be what you need it to be! Contact Carole Antoncich at 205-6486 or [carole.antoncich@metrokc.gov](mailto:carole.antoncich@metrokc.gov) for more information.



## Asian Pacific Islanders Against Dating Violence Involving Community Education (AP Advice)

The AP Advice program is a teen peer advocate program involving high school aged Asian/Pacific Islander young women most of whom are students from Garfield and Franklin High Schools. Some hail from Rainier Beach and Roosevelt as well. The 17 advocates represent 8 Asian/Pacific Islander ethnicities, and a variety of language groups.

The program started in February, 2000 and currently has one group of advocates fully trained. A second cycle of training is now taking place with "old" advocates training the new. As in other programs, teen advocates are trained in dating violence, sexual assault, facilitation and other topics. The AP Advice program adds sessions on oppression of Asian/Pacific Islanders, gender roles, media portrayals,

and the effect of API culture on young women growing up in America and cultural barriers in addressing issues of dating, domestic violence and sexual assault.

This year, advocates attended the Asian Pacific American Women's (APAW) Conference at WSU to develop skills and knowledge; and this summer, youth attended the Young Women's Conference held by Seattle Youth Peoples' Project and presented workshops on teen dating violence.

Advocates have also attended workshops on "Undoing Institutionalized Racism" and participated in community events and youth activism.

Asian Counseling and Referral Service (ACRS) started AP ADVICE because the majority of young Asian women don't access mainstream resources. As with all teens, young Asian/Pacific Islanders are more likely to disclose their concerns to their friends. Most programs have been mainly white/mainstream, so Asian girls often do not feel comfortable there. In addition, there are few programs targeting leadership among Asian young women, especially around relationships. AP ADVICE provides both outreach and leadership opportunities for girls.

Issues around relationships, especially dating and domestic violence and sexual assault, are usually taboo in Asian cultures. Many API girls are not allowed to date as teens, and so family discussion of decision making, power and abuse dynamics, and sexuality are limited. In many cases, Asian girls really don't even talk about boys to their families. So many girls don't receive positive socialization from their families on dating/boys.

However, girls do go out behind parents' backs, and when they need to

make decisions about relationships, they may be ill equipped. TV and popular culture can influence their actions. If they become involved in a relationship that turns violent, they feel they can't turn to their families. Sometimes girls will move out and move in with boyfriends, and there is tremendous estrangement from family and isolation that increases their danger in the relationship.

To address the needs of API young women in high school, Amy HyunAh Moline, AP ADVICE Coordinator and prevention specialist at ACRS, also provides empowerment/support groups at Franklin and Garfield High Schools. These groups provide a safe space for API young women to share their experiences and provide support to each other on a variety of topics. Dealing with being young women of color, being bi-cultural and addressing the normal stressors of adolescence are all frequent topics in discussion. For young women who need extra support, Amy provides a linkage to ACRS' mental health and case management services.

AP ADVICE mostly targets presentations to other API youth groups, groups in the International District, other youth centers, and also non-API programs. In addition, advocates have presented at Ryther Youth Center and they are trying to figure out how to do outreach in detention and other sites likely to reach young women at high risk.

AP ADVICE advocates work with other advocate programs in the Teen Advocate Network, with CARA, E. Cherry YWCA, Seattle Counseling Service for Sexual Minorities, New Beginnings, and DAWN, going into schools to saturate them with dating violence information. The Network's aim is to get all 10th graders educated on dating violence and to distribute brochures in order to help schools become aware of dating violence and healthy relationships. At the same time, they are trying to increase awareness of the availability of leadership programs and resources for many different communities and for girls in general.



## What to Look For Warning Signs of Dating Violence

- X **Extreme Jealousy or Possessiveness**
- X **Controlling Attitude**
- X **Sudden or Increased Isolation**
- X **Unpredictable Mood Swings**
- X **Blames Others for Problems and Feelings**
- X **Use of Alcohol or Drugs**
- X **Overly Sensitive**
- X **Explosive Temper**
- X **Force Used During An Argument**
- X **Force Used In Sex**
- X **Threats of Violence**
- X **Threats of Suicide**

## Who Can Help?

These agencies can provide crisis response to teens experiencing dating violence:

**Youth Eastside Services:** 425-747-4937

— Ask for Lisa Cordova, Sheri Davis or Belinda Lafferty

**New Beginnings:** 206-783-2848 — ask for Rebecca Yarmuth

**DAWN** (Domestic Abuse Women's Network) — 425-656-8423 X233 — Ask for Ammi

**KCSARC** (King County Sexual Assault Resource Center) — when sexual abuse involved

— 1-800-825-7273

**AP ADVICE** @ Asian Counseling & Referral Service: (Asian Pacific-Islanders Against Dating Violence Involving Community Education) - ask for Amy HyunAh Moline - 206-695-7585

Got a question (non-emergency) you need help with? **Ask Nicole at:** [dearnicoleadvice@hotmail.com](mailto:dearnicoleadvice@hotmail.com)

## ....who is this you left me wit

....who is this you left me wit/some simple bitch  
widda bad attitude/ i wants my things/  
i want my arm with the hot iron scar/ & my leg wit the  
flea bite/ i want my calloused feet and quick language back  
in my mouth/ fried plantains/ pineapple pear juice /  
sun-ra & joseph & jules/ i want my own things/ how i lived them/  
& give me my memories/ how i was when i waz there/  
you can't have them or do nothing wit them /  
stealing my shit from me/ don't make it yrs/ makes it stolen/  
somebody almost run off wit alla my stuff/ & i waz standin  
there/ looking at myself/ the whole time  
& it wazn't a spirit took my stuff/ waz a man whose  
ego walked round like Rodan's shadow/ waz a man faster  
n my innocence/ waz a love/ i made too much  
room for / almost run off wit alla my stuff/  
& i didn't know i'd give it up so quik/ & the one running wit it/  
don't know he got it/ & i'm shouting this is mine/ & he don't  
know he got it/ my stuff is the anonymous ripped off treasure  
of the year/ did you know somebody almost got away with me/  
me in a plastic bag under their arm/ me  
dangling on a string of personal carelessness/ i'm spattered wit  
mud & city rain/ & no i didn't get a chance to take a douche/  
hey man/ this is not your prerogative/ i gotta have me in my  
pocket/ to get round like a good woman shld/ & make the poem  
in the pot or the chicken in the dance/ what i got to do/  
i gotta have my stuff to do it to/  
Why don't ya find yr own things/ & leave this package  
Of me for my destiny/ what ya got to get from me/  
i'll give it to ya/ yeh/ i'll give it to ya/  
Round 5:00 in the winter/ when the sky is blue-red/  
& Dew City is getting pressed/ if it's really my stuff/  
ya gotta give it to me/ if ya really want it/ i'm  
the only one/ can handle it

excerpted from  
**For Colored Girls who have Considered Suicide When The Rainbow is Enuf**  
Ntozake Shange



**The Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community** has a website loaded with information at [www.dvinstitute.org](http://www.dvinstitute.org). Among the resources there are: bibliographies on adult and teen relationship violence in the African American community; newsletters highlighting books and conference proceedings (including a GREAT article on Spirituality and Domestic Violence and another great article on increasing cultural competence in serving the African American community).



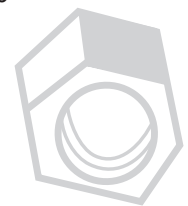
**The Family Violence Prevention Fund** is a national non

-profit mobilizing against domestic violence. It sponsors a project called "It IS your business," designed to spur grassroots activity to end domestic violence in the African American community. The campaign offers posters, an action kit for women and an action kit for men. The brochure for men specifically spells out how men can reach out to men to confront violent behavior towards girlfriends/partners and motivate violent men to get help. Check this out at: [www.fvpf.org](http://www.fvpf.org). The Family Violence Prevention Fund website is also a good starting point for resources on the effect of domestic violence on immigrant women and barriers they may face to getting services as immigrants and refugees.

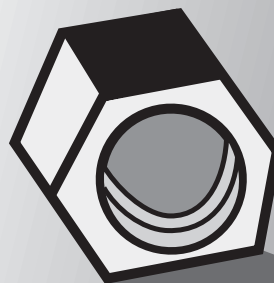
## Conference Brings National Leaders to Seattle to Talk DV — Focus Group On Youth Included!

**The Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community** was in Seattle November 30 — December 2nd for its semi-annual Forum. The Institute has sponsored Forums since 1998, with each having a specific focus area such as the linkage between substance abuse and domestic violence, and culturally competent approaches to working with women victimized by partners. The Seattle Forum was titled 'Health and Mental Health Consequences of Domestic Violence in the African American Community.' At this conference, the Institute used the opportunity to convene focus groups to delve further into specific aspects of DV in the African American Community. Bridget Griffin of the Teen Connection was invited to participate in the Teen/Youth Forum. She reports that several key themes emerged from the discussion:

- n Listen to teens — go directly to the source to understand the problem.
- n Practice unity within the service community — don't fight for position, instead collaborate.
- n Collaborate as well with "mainstream" groups wanting to serve African American youth. Have them work with existing community institutions, like churches and established ethnic minority led agencies.
- n Encourage African American achievers to "come back and give back" to the community.
- n Begin to try to address the increasing trend of female on male violence in the African American youth community.



## TOOLBOX



### Is the Medium the Message?

**The Teen Connection** program group helps young women make the connection between media images of women and themselves. Collages make a great starting point for this discussion. Young women comb through popular magazines to find the images they believe do or should reflect them. As each girl describes her collage to others in the group, a rich discussion can follow.





## Faith-Based Program Has Made Its Debut!

Following planning and training that began in 1998, Victorious Women's Ministry began the Teen Connection Program in late 1999. Teen advocates in the program are identified as "Dating Experts." They facilitate discussion groups and reach out to their peers at school and in the community. By keeping a focus on a broad range of relationship-related subjects, the program hopes to keep the doors open to all young women and build broad awareness of teen dating violence and particularly sexual violence in dating relationships.

Outreach by the program has focused on community and church groups — ground that they are plowing, says coordinator Bridget Griffin, who also works at King County Superior Court with domestic violence protection orders. The focus on teen dating violence is a new one for many faith communities so presentations concentrate on raising awareness and engaging congregations in recognizing and addressing the issue.

Bridget Griffin reports that sexual assault is a particularly prevalent problem for young African American women in dating relationships, which often involve younger girls with older adolescent males. While physically the partners can appear well matched, emotionally and in terms of negotiating skills the girls are often out-matched and can be vulnerable to sexual assault by their partners.

The six Dating Experts in the Teen Connection Program are now training a second set of peer advocates. Training includes presentations on dating violence, sexual violence, facilitation, public speaking, active listening. In addition, workshops on media and its influence on teens' views of dating and discussions of grief and loss among African American teens are included.



To contact the program, send email to: **Bridget Griffin, program coordinator,** at: [bridget.griffin@metrokc.gov](mailto:bridget.griffin@metrokc.gov).

## Immigrant and Refugee Teen Services Are Lacking — but Starting to Grow!

The Refugee Women's Alliance has recently started a group working with teens. REWA has worked primarily with adults, focusing on refugee communities from Asia and SE Asia, East Africa and Russia and the Ukraine. The new teen group focuses on self-esteem as an entry point, and will then move into working on prevention of sexual abuse by providing teen women with skills and emotional resources for making good decisions for their health and safety.

Beruke Giday, who coordinates the program, reports that on a broader basis, immigrant and refugee teens involved in violent dating relationships face barriers in seeking services. No targeted services are presently available, and mainstream services are often not aware of particular cultural barriers to talking about dating violence and seeking help. These include cultural norms about not talking to outsiders about issues that are considered family or private matters, a

perception that being the victim of violence by a partner is shameful, fears that no one will help with the situation, and a concern about bringing shame to the family unit as a whole.

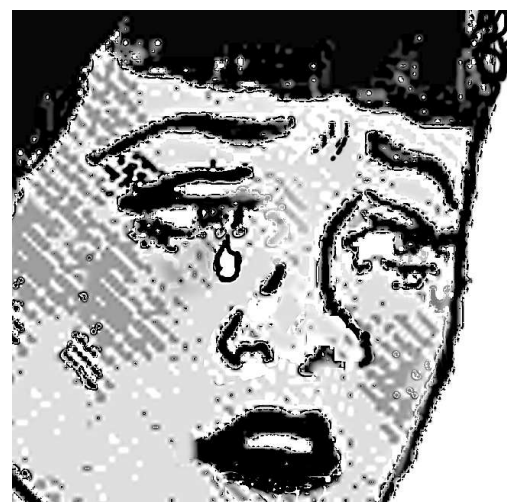
Services are coming, however, particularly on the prevention side! In addition to REWA's teen group, the Asian Pacific Islander Women and Family Safety Center is also starting a teen group. Throughout the winter of 2001, they will be conducting focus groups in schools and the community in order to have young Asian Pacific Islander teens define what they want in healthy relationships and what they need in order to get there. Based on the focus groups, they will design a curriculum for workshops and peer education. Starting in the spring of 2001, they will increase presentations in schools and recruit peer advocates with a goal of training 15 peer advocates who can start going out in the schools and community by fall of 2001. To date, the program has done some outreach in local schools and colleges, some in conjunction with other groups like REWA and Korean Counseling Service. Ultimately, they may develop support groups for teen women as well.

## Finding the center in the Central District

continued from page 1

The East Cherry YWCA program is building connections with others to ensure a solid net of services for African American teens and teens in general. Teen advocates work with their peers from Asian Counseling and Referral Service at Garfield and Franklin High Schools. They also participate with teen advocates from DAWN, Seattle Counseling Service for Sexual Minorities and Renton Area Youth Services in joint training programs monthly.

The East Cherry YWCA program has also connected with faith community programs like the Teen Connections program (see separate article) and Holgate Church of God in Christ — both of which are doing outreach to reduce domestic violence in the community. They are also talking with the Central Area Motivation Program (CAMP) about collaboration on domestic and dating violence programs. Finally, the Department of Social and Health Services has begun a contract with the East Cherry YWCA to go into community service



offices and work with TANF recipients on domestic violence issues. As a result of these connections, Lexi hopes that a coordinated system to address dating and domestic violence across the lifespan of African American women will develop.



## Talk Back To Us!

This is the fifth issue of ALERT! — a newsletter for people concerned about teen dating violence. With one issue in late 1999, and now four in 2000, we have been publishing for a full year! It's time for you to tell us what you think of ALERT! Is the information interesting? Is it useful to you in your work and/or interactions? What topics would you like to see covered? What resources or ideas would you like to share with others working with teens? Where should we be distributing ALERT! to make sure it's getting to those people who can use it? Please contact Carole Antoncich, King County Women's Program Coordinator, at 205-6486 or [carole.antoncich@metrokc.gov](mailto:carole.antoncich@metrokc.gov), with your feedback. We want this to be YOUR newsletter!

### Full Disclosure: Just Who Produces ALERT!?

ALERT! is produced by the King County Women's Advisory Board. This is a group of County residents who provide feedback to the King County Community

Services Division on issues affecting women and girls. Current members of the Advisory Board are:

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- n Linda Laigo Timmen (Dist. 8)
- n Pam Welborn-Whittington (Dist. 12)
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vises productions, and edits articles. Over the past year, Editorial Board members have included:

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Sylvie McGee, All For A Good Cause Consulting and George Potratz, Seachange Media, write and design layout for ALERT! under direction of the Editorial Board.

Tools  
to combat  
teen dating violence



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